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Plains Fascination: Artifacts of Rural Decay

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Graduate Catalog
Master of Fine Arts
Degree

Fort Hays
State University
Hays, Kansas

April 24th - May 14th,
2012

ARTIFACTS OF RURAL DECAY

Photographs by Bryan Ciligan

Plains Fascination: Artifacts of Rural Decay

I believe that my creative process has always been a means of retreat and refuge, or a method for coping with anxiety and frustration in a structured manner, or some sort of amalgam. As it evolved into something more complex, my creative process still retained its connection with my past and my ability to formulate complex ideas and therapeutic responses to situations I could not control.

When I moved from the large, urban region of Vancouver, British Columbia, in Western Canada, to a relatively small town in Kansas, I experienced significant culture shock. The vibrancy of my former home appeared to be missing in this rural, seemingly barren place. I departed from my usual method of expression and took up photography, but taking photographs of fields, animals, landscapes and sunsets, while enjoyable, did not satisfy my need for originality and challenge. However, I soon found that there were many things in this region that are creatively interesting and, yet, at first glance, largely unnoticed. I looked closely at the small things that tend to dot the landscape around my new home, the things that often go forgotten or are ignored. After all, I recognized that these were the objects that added flavor to the life and history of this place and its people, even if many no longer remembered them.

Therefore, the direction of my photographic efforts has been on the aesthetic value of the details of these places and objects that are undergoing neglect and significant decay. Many times we look at things without really seeing them, and they remain at the edges of our gaze, noticed only by our subconscious mind. We all have places we pass by with indifference, not really seeing common, everyday items. While travelling from place to place throughout the countryside with my family, I have observed many of these lost or forgotten artifacts. My exploration of these artifacts left behind in larger communities like Hays, Salina, or Great Bend and in smaller places like Downs, Waldo or Paradise, has been a cathartic experience and has allowed me to reflect on my past and the imaginary worlds into which I would retreat. In this case, I was retreating into a real past full of artifacts now discarded and abandoned.



My intent is to shine a light on the often overlooked details and explore them through many of the photographic techniques and materials with which I have been already exploring the world around me. Whether those details be beautiful or otherwise, my intention is to capture these peripheral elements and hold the viewers' attention long enough to bring forth a conscious awareness and elicit some emotional response from them, whether it be discomfort, peace, joy, or any of the myriad emotions in between.

Perhaps, I may even draw forth questions in the viewers' minds about the history of the objects they are viewing, what memories are attached to them, and evoke similar memories in the viewers themselves. I can perhaps grant the viewer a moment to reflect on the transience of life and the ravages of time and the elements. These artifacts, be they objects or places, represent the hopes and dreams, the pain and the joy of those that once owned them. In this world of the disposable and easily replaced, we forget that many of the articles in these images took months or even years of a persons' life to acquire and therefore they have much more significance attached to them.

Graduate Committee

Leland W. Powers, Associate Professor of Art

Allen Craven, Associate Professor of Art

Tobias Flores, Assistant Professor of Art

Dr. Pamela K. Shaffer, Professor of English



Dr. Edward Hammond, President

Timothy R. Crowley, DMA

Dean of Graduate Studies & Research

Assistant Provost for Internationalization

Leland W. Powers, Chair, Department of
Art & Design

This catalog is submitted to the Graduate
School in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts



Country Roads - HDR Digital Photograph - 20x16



Outskirts of Paradise - HDR Digital Photograph - 14x11



Ruined Church -
HDR Digital Photograph - 16x20



Gas Station Office -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Slow Decline - HDR Digital Photograph - 20x16



Rural Decay - HDR Digital Photograph - 14x11



Old Garage -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Oil Pump -
HDR Digital Photograph - 8x10



Phonebooth -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Fire Pump -
HDR Digital Photograph - 8x10



Uneasy - HDR Digital Photograph - 20x16



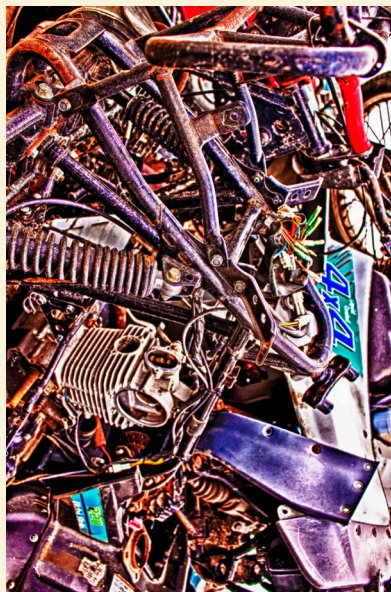
Trailer Trash - HDR Digital Photograph - 14x11



Play Wagon - HDR Digital Photograph - 10x8



4x4 (Wide) - Triptych
HDR Digital Photograph - 8x10



4x4 (Close) - Triptych
HDR Digital Photograph - 8x10



4x4 (Macro) - Triptych
HDR Digital Photograph - 8x10



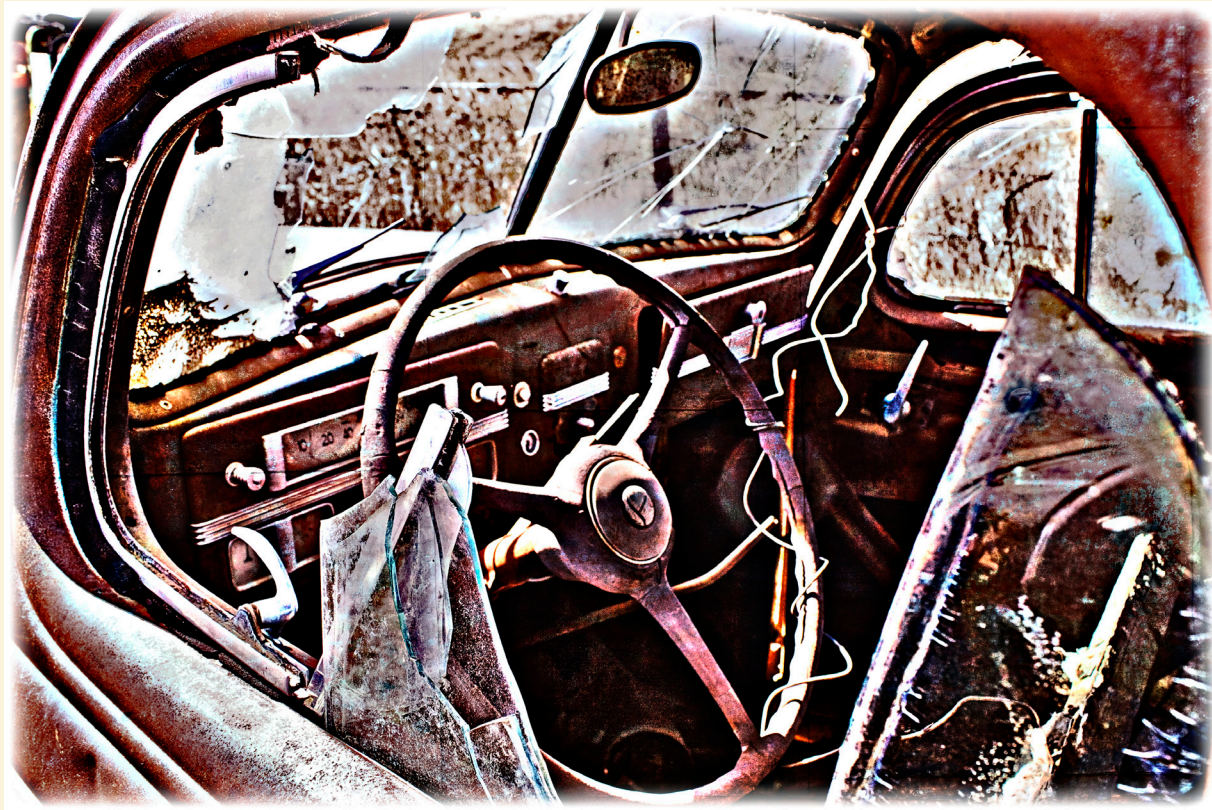
Death Row - HDR Digital Photograph - 14x11



Dreaming of Blue Skies and Road Trips -
HDR Digital Photograph - 16x20



Final Resting Place -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Wreck - HDR Digital Photograph - 14x11



Ford -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Gears -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Shattered - HDR Digital Photograph - 20x16



Rusty Boxes -
HDR Digital Photograph - 8x10



Metal Bones -
HDR Digital Photograph - 16x20



Wide Open - HDR Digital Photograph Metallic Print - 20x16



Scrap Metal - HDR Digital Photograph - 20x16



Memories of Long Roads -
HDR Digital Photograph - 20x24



Chain Driven -
HDR Digital Photograph - 16x20



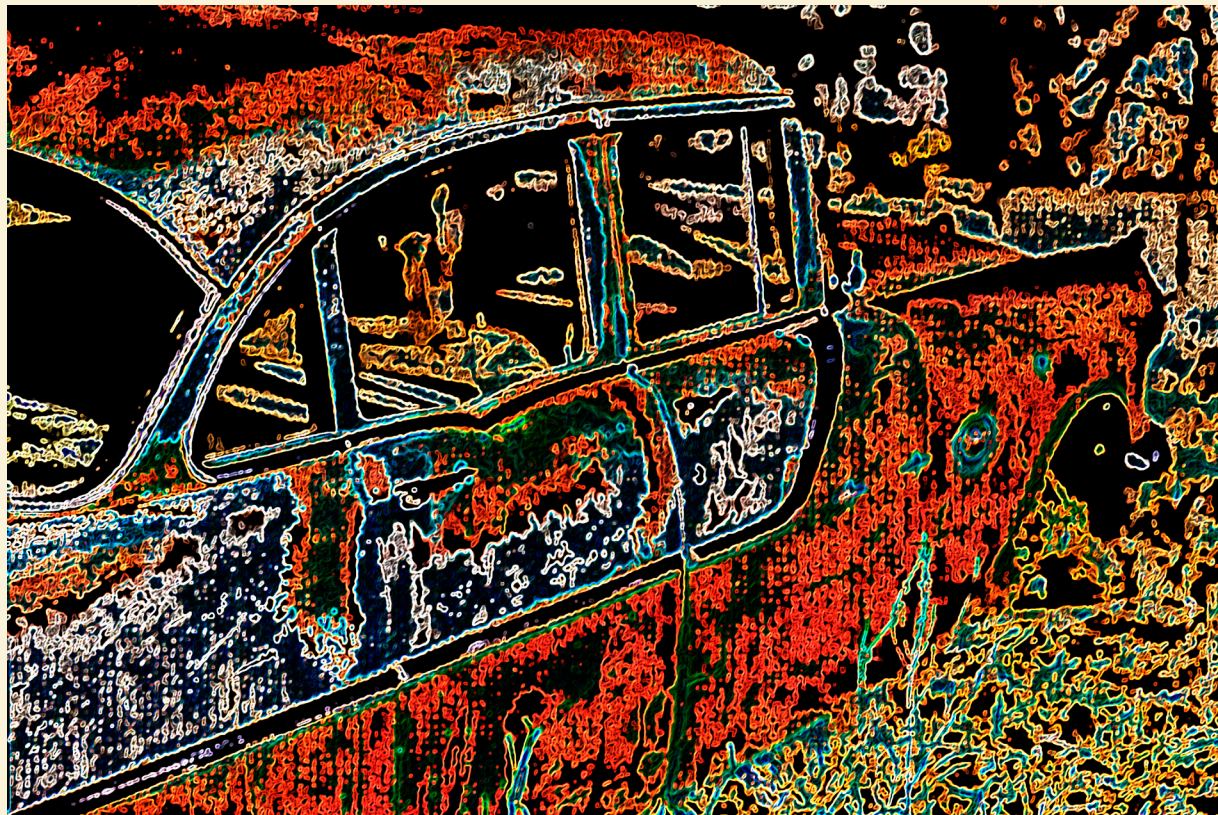
Always Watching -
HDR Digital Photograph - 16x20



Aging Chains -
HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14



Broken Heart - HDR Digital Photograph - 14x11



Glow - HDR Digital Photograph - 20x16



Olds -

HDR Digital Photograph - 11x14

Black & White Images Projected

1. Paradise - Digital B&W
2. Cedar Bluffs Schoolhouse - Digital B&W
3. Burden of Years - Digital B&W
4. Western Style - Digital B&W (Holga Style)
5. Death of an Opera House - Digital B&W (Antique Plate Style)
6. Derelict - Digital B&W
7. Unwelcome - Digital B&W (Antique Plate Style)
8. Light at the End - Digital B&W (High Contrast)
9. Abandoned - Digital B&W (Sepia)
10. Brothers in Decay - Digital B&W
11. Grain Truck - Digital B&W
12. Chevrolet - Digital B&W
13. So Many Bodies - Digital B&W
14. Life Lines - Digital B&W
15. A-Frame - Digital B&W
16. Bolts - Digital B&W
17. Corded Steel - Digital B&W
18. Unravelled - Digital B&W
19. Aging Machinery - Digital B&W
20. Hardship - Digital B&W
21. Bathtime - Digital B&W
22. Grandma's Closet - Digital B&W
23. True Love Forgotten - Digital B&W
24. Story Time With Dr. Higley - Digital B&W

Biography

Bryan Gilligan grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia. He recieved a number of certificates in Graphic Design and Typography and spent many years working in the printing and graphic communications industry. He recieved his BFA in Fine Art Photography and a BS in Secondary Education, both cum laude, from Fort Hays State University, where he is currently an MFA candidate in Photography to be completed at commencement this Spring.

Bryan's work has been exhibited in regional, national and international juried competitions. He plans to pursue a career teaching art. Currently, he lives in Hays, Kansas, though there are plans to return to Vancouver in the near future.

Show Record and Awards

August 2012/2011/2010/2009 - Finalist and Published in the "Photographer's Forum-Nikon's Best of College Photography Annual", National Publication, Santa Barbara, California.

April 2012 - MFA Exhibition "Plains Fascination: Artifacts of Rural Decay", Hays, Kansas.

April 2012/2011/2009/2008/2007 - Exhibited at Smoky Hill Art Show, Hays, Kansas.

January 2012/2011/2009/2008 - Exhibited at the Five State Photography Exhibition, Hays, Kansas.

December 2011 - Honorable Mention and Published in the "Photographer's Forum-Sigma's Best of Photography Annual", National Publication, Santa Barbara, California.

October/November 2011 - Exhibited at MPLS "Where in the World" Art Show, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

September 2011 - First Place in Kansas University Medical Center Rural Health and Education Contest in the Community Category. Kansas City, Kansas.

August 2011 - Bronze Award in Emotive Portraits, Better Photography Magazine's Best Photo of the Year, Chittaway Bay, Australia.

August 2011/2010/2009/2008 - Published in "Lines from the Middle of Nowhere", College Publication, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas.

April 2011 - Collaborative show at Hays Public Library "Artbook: It's Complicated", Hays, Kansas.

Show Record and Awards - Cont.

March 2011 - 2nd Place and cash award in Kansas University Landon Center for Aging competition, Kansas City, Kansas.

March 2011 - Finalist in two categories and an honorable mention in the children/single image category in Worldwide Photography Gala Awards Annual Pollux Award competition, York, United Kingdom.

October 2010 - 2nd Place and cash award in Computer Generated at the Russell Original Art Review (R.O.A.R), Russell, Kansas.

September 2010 - Accepted into the Museum of Computer Art (MoCA), Brooklyn, New York.

September 2010 - Third Place and an Honorable mention in Kansas University Medical Center Rural Health and Education Contest, both pieces also to be featured in a 2011 Kansas Hospital Association Calendar, Kansas City, Kansas.

April 2010 - Exhibited at the 2010 Collegiate Aesthetic Show at the Birger-Sandzen Gallery, Lindsborg, Kansas.

January 2010 - Exhibited at the Five State Photography Exhibition, received juror's merit award in the people category, cash prize for second place, Hays, Kansas.

December 2009/2008 - Finalist and Published in the "Photographer's Forum-Canon's Best of Photography Annual", National Publication, Santa Barbara, California.

October 2009/2007 - Honorable mention at the Russell Original Art Review (R.O.A.R), Russell, Kansas.

August 2009 - Finalist in two categories at the International Photography Awards, Los Angeles, California.

August 2009 - Featured artist for August 2009 on MyArtSpace.com

April 2009/2008/2007 - Exhibited at Student Honors exhibition at Moss-Thorns Gallery, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas.

October 2008 - First Place and Cash Award in Mixed Media at the Russell Original Art Review (R.O.A.R), Russell, Kansas.

Spring/Fall 2008, Spring/Fall 2007, Fall 2005, Fall 2004 - Dean's Honor Roll, Fort Hays State University, Hays, Kansas.

April 2008 - BFA Exhibition "Eclectic Spirit" at Hays Public Library, Hays, Kansas.

November 2007 - Exhibited at Semolino Cafe Art Show, Hays, Kansas.

April 2007 - Honorable mention at the Smoky Hill Art Show, Hays, Kansas.



Thanks to: All of my family, especially my wife, Sandra, who provided me much support and love and my daughter Rhiannon, for whom I always strove to better myself, my graduate committee: Leland, Allan, Toby, and Dr. Shaffer for thier invaluable feedback, other members of the art department: Martha, Colleen Dr. Faber and Linda for thier help and advice, Library Staff: Lynn, Angela, Sherry, Lacey, Mitch, everyone in ILL and Janice Basgall for making my time here enjoyable, Friends, Classmates and Acquaintances: Brandon, Gary, Bronson, Erin, Ashley, Alicia and the staff and teachers of The West Side School for helping me manage the myriad situations that arose during my stay here.